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Inductive Concepts of Teacher Education--The Undergraduate Reading Methods Course.

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An inductive reading methods course was offered to 30 junior elementary education students at the University of Minnesota in 1966. Course objectives and procedures were planned with cooperating public school personnel. As preparation for tutoring, the university students were instructed in methods of informal reading diagnosis and in the compilation of necessary materials. Under the supervision of the course instructor, the student teachers conducted individual tutoring sessions with 30 remedial reading students. Critical discussions of instructional problems followed. Under the cooperative supervision of the elementary principal, the cooperating teacher, and the course instructor, the university students conducted group reading instruction. It was concluded that clearer communication should be established between methods course instructors and cooperating school personnel. College students should be provided a more extensive and diversified program for reading methods. Student teachers should have some monetary provision for purchasing necessary teaching materials, and transportation to and from teaching centers should be furnished. (BS)

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Inductive Concepts of Teacher Education
The Undergraduate Reading Methods Course

Unquestionably, the focus of the present local, state, and federal interests occasioned by the various "Aids to Education" legislation centers on the teaching of reading in our public and private schools. Though the extensive school projects now underway may have different social, economic, cultural, educational, or vocational goals, stated or implied in each project is the objective of improving the reading abilities of the populations involved. It is difficult to separate the many social ills of the nation, as these problems relate to our adolescent and young adult populations, from the problem of the inefficient teaching of reading in our elementary schools.

Though some tenuous liason exists between the public schools and the colleges of teacher education in the major federal programs to improve the national level of literacy, such liason is generally limited to university and college consultative services to public school programs already designed. Indeed, in many instances faculty personnel in institutions of higher learning are uninformed about or unaware of school improvement projects within the same community. In other instances, public school systems are unwilling to encourage active teacher education faculty participation in ongoing or contemplated educational projects affecting teachers and pupils.

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There are many reasons traditionally cited for the rather independent attitudes of public school systems and schools of teacher education. Though the departments of teacher education throughout the nation do utilize the public schools for various laboratory, student teaching and intern functions it would be incorrect to say that the university or college component influences to any significant degree, the reading

curriculum or instructional procedures of the classroom component. Further, it is argued with zeal on both sides that such separation of responsibility for instructional design in public school classrooms should be continued.

Such negative attitudes regarding cooperative efforts in both curriculum design and instructional implementation in the area of reading are invariably based on the traditional roles of the colleges of teacher education and the public schools in the training of reading teachers.

The problem is first one of sequence; that is, the college reading methods preparation is effected in various instances either before, during, or after the "student teaching" experiences in the public schools. Secondly, and more importantly, the problem is one of implementation. Whether the reading methods course is scheduled before, during or after the student teaching experiences, it is always taught <u>separate from</u> public school practice. It is precisely this accepted dichotomy between the theory of teaching reading and reading practice in public schools which has prevented more progressive and efficient programs for the training of teachers.

In the Fall Quarter, 1966 an inductive type reading methods course was offered to undergraduates of the College of Education, University of Minnesota. The course had one major objective -- to improve the quality of teacher education programs in reading instruction at the undergraduate level through the design of a reading methods course totally implemented in public schools.

This presentation outlines the specific procedures which were used in the conduct of the first of inductive type coursesoffered to University of Minnesota undergraduates and which, with slight modifications, are presently used.

In an overwhelming majority of the schools of teacher education, the undergraduate reading methods course is a textbook oriented, lecture -- discussion type offering, It is almost always taught on the college campus though demonstration

classes are sometimes used in an attempt to provide some observed application of the theoretical discussions. Such courses are, by their very nature deductive in operation; that is, the student is expected to learn practical applications of technique through logical deduction from the principles of teaching reading presented by college classroom lecture.

There are many serious impediments to successful adaptation of such deductive procedures to improved teacher practice in reading.

Available research on the teaching of reading, and it is substantial, convinces every serious investigator that there is no stable theory of teaching reading. Indeed, the most recent and by far the most significant research on the teaching of elementary school reading, the Cooperative First Grade Research Project sponsored by the United States Office of Education in 1964 provides at least one unassailable conclusion:

> The efficiency of any reading method or system is significantly conditioned by the instructional competence of the teacher and the learning characteristics of the pupil.

Thus, whatever theories one holds concerning how reading should be taught are immediately complicated by individual teaching and learning behaviors regardless of the reading system chosen as the medium of instruction.

The campus taught reading methods course shields the undergraduate from the realities of seeing any specific theory of teaching reading proven ineffective in practice. Unfortunately, once the reading methods course is put to the test in student teaching or in actual classroom responsibility, the beginning teacher has little to rely on other than college classroom experiences or the experiences of fellow teachers whose philosophy, method, and style of teaching reading may very well be incompatible with the instructional capabilities of the beginning teacher.

Additionally, the deductive principle employed in teacher education methods courses is, in itself, suspect. Logical deduction has traditionally been used in teaching religion and philosophy. It is becoming less utilized in the teaching of the liberal arts and it has not been relied upon in the teaching of the sciences since Copernicus. There appeared, therefore, ample justification in light of the more scientific refinements in behavioral science investigations to experimentally abandon the use of deductive procedures in the training of reading teachers for elementary school classrooms.

The inductive concept in reading methods course procedure has as its psychological foundation the teaching experiences of the methods student, the student's reflection on those experiences in light of a theoretical framework, and the critical evaluation of those student experiences by a Professor-Teacher skilled in research theory and classroom practice.

In the Spring Quarter, 1966, one undergraduate section of Ed. C.I. 60, Reading in the Elementary School was taught at the Marcy Elementary School, Minneapolis Public Schools. Preliminary experimentation for this undergraduate course was accomplished in the Jefferson Elementary School, Clovis Unified School District, Fresno County, California.

There were four phases to the inductive approach used in this undergraduate reading methods course.

Phase #1 - Planning With Cooperating Public School Personnel

Prior to the 1966 Spring Quarter, extensive discussion was held with the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, Minneapolis Public Schools. The objectives of the proposed inductive type reading methods course were outlined, procedures for implementation and supervision explained, and permission secured to conduct the course in the Marcy Elementary School, Minneapolis.

The Marcy School was chosen because of its proximity to the campus, the fact that it was not used by the Department of Elementary Education for demonstration purposes and because its pupil population reflected the wide range of reading abilities normally found in a public elementary school.

Additional discussion was held between the Course Instructor and the Marcy Elementary School Principal regarding the practical and logistical problems of accommodating an undergraduate reading methods course in an elementary school charged with the responsibility of educating pupils in a normal learning environment. Further discussion was held among the Course Instructor, Elementary Principal and Cooperating Elementary Teachers on the theoretical aspects of the course objectives as well as the practical aspects of scheduling a tutoring session for selected elementary grade pupils during the school day.

A critical problem was the selection of public school pupils for the tutoring practicum. It was felt that it would be inadvisable to expose the inexperienced undergraduates to pupils whose reading problems were caused by psychological-emotional, physiological or intellectual disabilities. The pupils selected, therefore, were of normal intelligence as obtained from the available cumulative records, were at least one or more years retarded in reading as determined by standardized testing and were those pupils judged by classroom teachers to be in greatest need of tutoring services.

Thirty such pupils were selected for individual tutoring in the undergraduate reading methods course practicum.

Phase #2 - Preparation for Tutoring

The thirty junior elementary education students enrolled in the Ed C.I. 60 inductive course in reading methods received ten hours of instruction prior to assignment in the Marcy ElementarySchool. This instruction was accomplished by (lecture-demonstration) (observation - critical evaluation) procedures.

The Ed. C.I. 60 students were instructed in methods of conducting informal reading diagnosis which included use of interest inventories, methods of obtaining instructional level for individual pupils and methods of recording and classifying word recognition and comprehension deficiencies.

This instruction was culminated in a demonstration of informal diagnostic procedures conducted by the Course Instructor with an elementary school pupil deficient in those reading skills appropriate to the enrolled grade level.

The diagnosis demonstration was critically evaluated by the Course Instructor as to examining procedures, pupil responses, and the adequacy of the information obtained as this information would be related to subsequent reading instruction.

Materials for conducting this individual diagnosis were constructed by the students under the supervision of the Course Instructor and discussion as to the adequacy of materials for obtaining an accurate pupil diagnosis accompanied the diagnostic materials development activity.

Following diagnosis and analysis of the reading abilities of the elementary grade pupil examined by the Course Instructor, a tutoring lesson was planned, materials prepared and the reading methods to be used in the lesson were outlined and discussed. The Course Instructor under observation of the undergraduate students conducted the

demonstration tutoring lesson. In subsequent discussion, the lesson was evaluated in light of its effectiveness in meeting the reading skill needs of the pupil tutored.

The preparation for tutoring, then, consisted of carefully assigned readings in the professional text constituting the theoretical framework of the course, lecture-discussion of informal methods of diagnosis, elaboration of eclectic methods of tutorial instruction, demonstration testing and tutoring by the Course Instructor, and critical evaluation of the diagnostic and instructional techniques.

Phase #3 - Tutoring in the Public School

Three forty-five minute tutoring sessions and three half-hour critical evaluation sessions were scheduled weekly for the ten week quarter.

The pupils to be tutored were dismissed from regular classroom work and reported to areas located within the building where tutoring stations were arranged for easy supervision.

Initial sessions consisted of informal reading diagnosis and discussion between the undergraduate tutor and the pupil relative to pupil reading interests. The diagnostic procedures of the undergradustes were closely supervised by the Course Instructor and the first evaluation sessions were concerned with those procedures as evaluated by the students themselves and by the Course Instructor.

The individual differences among the undergraduates in the many personal, emotional and instructional competencies essential for teaching success were immediately apparent. Some students needed little additional direction and minor supervision; others needed individual conferences and close supervision. All students were immediately aware of the instructional problems confronting any effective teacher of reading.

At first, the tutoring sessions were rather simple and reflected the demonstration procedures of the Course Instructor. With confidence in their experiences, knowledge gained through the critical evaluations, required readings and discussion with other students, the tutoring lessons became quite sophisticated and again indicated the wide range of student skill in selection of reading materials, preparation of lesson plans and instructional materials, and instructional capability.

Through the supervision of the tutoring sessions, the Course Instructor was immediately able to determine the effectiveness of his own instruction, the effectiveness of the reading methods used and the effectiveness of the undergraduate students in meeting the reading skill needs of elementary grade pupils.

The critical evaluations which followed the undergraduate tutoring sessions were of primary importance to the conduct of the course. Since the instructional problems of the undergraduates were quite real, the questions which those students asked were highly specific and required answers whose correctness would immediately be put to the test. The instructional problems of the college students were discussed openly and, in time, suggestions for improvement came about as often through student discussion before the formal critique as during the critique period. The esprit which developed as undergraduates and Course Instructor shared, succeeded and failed in improving the reading abilities of elementary school pupils provided more than enough motivation to overcome the taxing requirements of the course.

Phase #4 - Group Instruction

It was planned to introduce the undergraduates to group teaching situations at some selected time during the course. It was difficult to determine precisely when transfer from individual tutoring to teaching groups of pupils should occur. It was anticipated that some students would be ready for group teaching experiences almost immediately; others, needing additional practice in tutoring, would not be ready for

classroom assignments until the latter stages of the course. Because of the morale dynamics of the undergraduates, however, it was decided to allow all to participate in the group teaching experiences and to adjust the instructional complexity of the reading group to the instructional capability of the undergraduate student assigned to that group.

Group teaching sessions involving all elementary grade pupils in the elementary school began in the regular classrooms the sixth week of the academic quarter.

The first problems encountered were logistical; physical arrangement of groups within the regular classroom and availablilty of developmental reading materials to allow all elementary grade pupils to be instructed at the same time. These problems were solved by the cooperating public school teacherswho, by careful planning, exchange of reading textbooks and flexible scheduling were able to accommodate the thirty undergraduates in the seven elementary classrooms used.

Much discussion among the Elementary Principal, the Cooperating Teachers and the Course Instructor preceded these group teaching experiences. The responsibilities of each supervising participant were thoroughly understood. Instructional responsibility for the elementary pupil group was assumed by the college undergraduate, direct supervision of undergraduate teaching and of her own pupils was assumed by the Classroom Teacher, and direct supervision of all undergraduate teaching personnel was assumed by the Elementary Principal and the Course Instructor.

Again, there were wide differences in the instructional competencies of the undergraduates; students not regarded as having particularly strong capabilities from the tutoring evaluations responded energetically to group teaching situations. Other students, particularly effective in tutoring required much closer supervision during group teaching experiences.

Gradually, as the need for constructive criticism of the undergraduates' teaching techniques became less, more elaborate pupil grouping patterns were outlined in the

discussion periods and immediately were practiced in classrooms under supervision during the group teaching periods. The instructional rationale for the group teaching, then, was to guide the undergraduate to a realistic appreciation of the individual differences of pupils which were so clearly apparent during the tutoring phase.

There was close supervision of all instructional procedures used in the group teaching experiences and daily informal discussions were held with the Cooperating Classroom Teachers. A formal conference among the Elementary Principal, Cooperating Teachers and Course Instructor was held once a week.

Of the many problems inherent in implementing an inductive teacher education model in a public school, five were immediately recognized and appear solvable.

Problem #1. Training of Professor-Teachers to implement and supervise inductive type reading methods courses in public schools.

A major obstacle to improving the quality of reading methods courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels is the development of procedures for training effective teachers of teachers.

Problem #2. Training of cooperating public school teachers to assist in the Supervision and evaluation of inductive type reading methods courses in elementary schools.

If inductive courses are to be successfully implemented in public schools, then clearer lines of communication must be established between methods course instructors and cooperating public school personnel who supervise undergraduates in laboratory experiences and in the student teaching experiences.

Problem #3. Need for more extensive and diversified reading methods theory and for more efficient means of providing such knowledge to undergraduate and graduate students.

A justified criticism of most deductive type reading methods courses is that the content of such courses generally reflects the point of view of the author(s) of the required course text(s) as interpreted by the course instructor. Since most authors of the textbooks commonly used in colleges and schools of teacher education have established interests in certain types of reading programs, it is difficult to avoid rather restricted views of the process of learning to read.

Problem #4. Student costs in providing materials of reading instruction.

Any individualization of reading instruction in public schools requires the design and construction of reading materials not generally available in the regular classroom. Individual word recognition cards, materials for practice in phrase reading, devices for every-pupil response in various skill activities and study guides for the improvement of comprehension and recall abilities are examples of the type of supplementary materials necessary to effect individualized reading instruction.

At present, public school systems cannot afford such ancillary instructional items without some serious budget revision and, in most instances, college budgets do not provide funds for instructional materials to be used by undergraduates in public school programs.

Problem #5. Transportation to and from public school teaching centers.

For the pilot undergraduate inductive reading methods course, students were expected to provide their own means of transportation to and from the Marcy Elementary School slightly less than a mile from the campus. In most cases students walked,

others bicycled, a few, more fortunate, rode. In inclement weather the added problems were obvious. It was felt also that additional opportunities for student and instructional discussion were lost because some common means of transportation was not available.

The use of buses to transport the undergraduates to the teaching centers would provide opportunities for discussion in route, adherance to a regular time schedule for teaching experiences and, in general, relieve commuter problems of unscheduled transportation.

Evaluation of the Inductive Reading Methods Course

Approximately 500 undergraduates have been trained in reading methods in the public schools of Clovis, California and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The instructional effectiveness of those undergraduates now in-service is currently being evaluated. An analysis of these evaluations will be available September 1, 1968.